

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A slide-type multi-directional input key comprising: a key top which has an upper portion protruding from an insertion hole extending through an exterior member and a lower portion having a pushing member protruding downwardly therefrom and which is capable of sliding in the direction of a hole inner surface of the insertion hole; and a plurality of contact input portions adapted to effect input upon receiving pressure from the pushing member when the key top is caused to slide.

2. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 1, further comprising a key sheet formed of a rubber-like resilient material and adapted to support the key top so as to allow the key top to slide from the initial position in the direction of the hole inner surface of the insertion hole and in the return direction toward the initial position, wherein the key sheet is firmly attached to the key top and the exterior member.

3. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 2, wherein the key top is composed of upper and lower key top portions, between which the key sheet is sandwiched for firm attachment.

4. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 2, wherein the key sheet includes an inclined portion spreading

out from the portion firmly attached to the key top, and an arch-shaped curved portion formed by upwardly bending the inclined portion starting with its lower end portion, and wherein the wall thickness of an erect wall portion in the outer periphery of the curved portion is larger than the wall thickness of an erect wall portion on the inner periphery thereof and that of the inclined portion.

5. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 1, wherein the exterior member has on a back surface thereof a stopper protrusion for stopping the sliding of the key top before the key top comes into contact with the insertion hole.

6. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 2, wherein the exterior member has on a back surface thereof a stopper protrusion for stopping the sliding of the key top before the key top comes into contact with the insertion hole.

7. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 1, further comprising a central contact portion below the pushing member of the key top at an initial position thereof.

8. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 2, further comprising a central contact portion below the pushing member of the key top at an initial position thereof.

9. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 7, wherein when the key top is at a slide position, the bottom surface of the pushing member is situated above the central contact portion so that the pushing member can effect input through both the contact input portions and the central contact portion.

10. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 1, wherein the exterior member is a ring-shaped outer-ring key top allowing multi-directional input.

11. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 2, wherein the exterior member is a ring-shaped outer-ring key top allowing multi-directional input.

12. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 5, wherein the exterior member is a ring-shaped outer-ring key top allowing multi-directional input.

13. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 7, wherein the exterior member is a ring-shaped outer-ring key top allowing multi-directional input.

14. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim

1, wherein the plurality of contact input portions are formed by a membrane switch composed of a base film with a plurality of lower contact portions, a flexible film with a plurality of upper contact portions corresponding to the lower contact portions, and a spacer film forming a predetermined gap between the base film and the flexible film.

15. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 2, wherein the plurality of contact input portions are formed by a membrane switch composed of a base film with a plurality of lower contact portions, a flexible film with a plurality of upper contact portions corresponding to the lower contact portions, and a spacer film forming a predetermined gap between the base film and the flexible film.

16. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 5, wherein the plurality of contact input portions are formed by a membrane switch composed of a base film with a plurality of lower contact portions, a flexible film with a plurality of upper contact portions corresponding to the lower contact portions, and a spacer film forming a predetermined gap between the base film and the flexible film.

17. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim

7, wherein the plurality of contact input portions are formed by a membrane switch composed of a base film with a plurality of lower contact portions, a flexible film with a plurality of upper contact portions corresponding to the lower contact portions, and a spacer film forming a predetermined gap between the base film and the flexible film.

18. A slide-type multi-directional input key according to claim 10, wherein the plurality of contact input portions are formed by a membrane switch composed of a base film with a plurality of lower contact portions, a flexible film with a plurality of upper contact portions corresponding to the lower contact portions, and a spacer film forming a predetermined gap between the base film and the flexible film.